

New Voices & Familiar Faces

by Kim Byers, Ann Arbor VAMC

More than 350 veterans are in Snowmass Village this week, hitting the slopes and testing their mettle at the 15^{th} annual Winter Sports Clinic. Of those, 95 are doing it for the very first time. Here's a few observations from our skiers – both novices and experienced – about the skiing so far.

First timers are definitely showing their spunk.

Long-time ski instructor Glen Harrison from Durango, Colo., works with intermediate, advanced, and what he calls the "never-ever" skiers as well. While he enjoys them all, he prefers teaching the beginners "something new, something they've never learned before, and watching them find a new sport, a new spirit, and getting out there to have fun – like everybody else."

Monday's first-timers had a lot of that. Jack Richards, a 73-year-old Navy veteran from St. Petersburg, Fla., hadn't skied for 60 years. He was encouraged to ski by other members of the Visually Impaired Services Team (VIST) from the Bay Pines, Fla. VAMC. "I said no, but they just wouldn't stop asking me!" Now, Richards is glad he came, and proud of his accomplishments so far. He credits the VIST program for the many things he is now able to do. "If it wasn't for VA and this program, I wouldn't be here. Everyone has been so nice, and so cordial, it's just wonderful."

Tucson, Ariz., veteran Brad Lang, 37, had a widespread grin as he described his first morning skiing. "It's fantastic," he said. Hearing about the Clinic at the VAMC in Tucson, Lang leads an active lifestyle, playing basketball, and wheelchair road racing. "I like adrenaline rushes," he added – and this sure is

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It's Official... Veterans Earn a Home Run

by Susan Fishbein VA Los Angeles

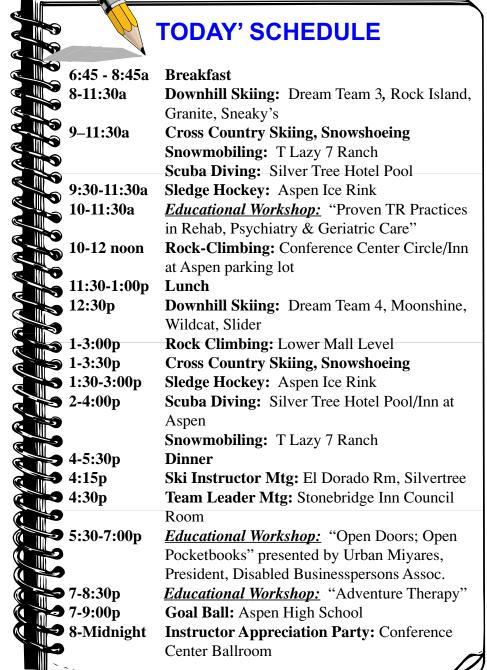
You can't get much more official in Major League Baseball than being an umpire. So how did one former and one current Major League umpire get to the Winter Sports Clinic—a venue not exactly known for baseball.

Larry Barnett, an umpire for 30 years and Jerry Layne, currently an umpire, are no strangers to the event. Through their close association with DAV, the Clinic has become a big league event for both. Barnett has not only been to every Clinic so far, he's also visited every VAMC in the country at least three times each.

"Veterans are the classiest group of people I've ever met," Barnett said. "Every day should be Veteran's Day."

Layne, who counts this his fourth Clinic event, remembers his first visit to a VA hospital in the cancer unit. He was not quite sure what

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—"Home Run" con't—

he was in for, but the experience has forever changed his life. "I'll never forget the first veteran who looked up at me," he said. "When we met, he just glowed. I realized at that moment, what this was all about."

They both agreed they are not here for recognition. As Barnett puts it, "I look for just one smile...and I never leave with just one."

Thanks for hitting a home run for our veterans, guys.

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one! I love being out in nature, and this is very challenging. You're out in another device besides your wheelchair, able to participate with other people, and there's a lot of satisfaction in just doing it. It's a great way to show others what people with disabilities are capable of doing."

Todd Russell, a first-timer from Katy, Texas, is very excited to be here. "I realized I wasn't reaching my full potential. I'd been exercising, and I wanted to test out my new abilities," he said. "I have never skied before, but I just want to ski, relax, and have a good time out here. Exercising has helped me feel more mobile...the best I've felt since my injury, nine years ago."

And now from the veterans who have skied around the block a few times...

David Fowler, also from Katy, Texas, encouraged Todd Russell to try the Clinic this

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WEATHER CORNER

Remember yesterday? It'll be the same today--mostly cloudy. Snow may appear tomorrow.

Today's High: 46 Tonight's Low: 22

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year. It took three years for Fowler to agree. Skiing at the Clinic for the fourth time now, Fowler began after seeing photos of the Clinic and hearing about it from friends at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, in which he has competed for ten years. He's seen the Clinic grow since he started attending, and has enjoyed the new location in Snowmass this week. "People are warm, they're open to us, and everything is going great!"

Terry Livingston, a visually impaired skier from Seminole, Fla. has attended the Clinic eight times. "I skied when I was active duty, but when I started losing my sight, I didn't think I could anymore. Then I read an article about the Clinic, and I said, 'I've got to go to this!'" Skiing restores my confidence in myself, and rejuvenates me. It charges my batteries, and when I go home, people have to tell me to chill out! I just get so excited about things again. I love seeing people year after year – it's like a family reunion here."

Michael Horta, from Redlands, Calif., has attended the Clinic four times, and also calls it a "family reunion." "I enjoy seeing everybody, all the volunteers, and the instructors are awesome. I only get to ski once a year, and this is where I come." Horta hopes to work on his skiing skills this week and continue to ski at higher elevations.

San Diegan Thomas Dahl has also skied at three past Clinics, and liked the idea of skiing "around upscale Aspen!" Dahl, who skis back home, just got his own personal ski and is pleased to be able to "tune it up" here at the Clinic.

Mike Trujillo, from Huntington Beach, Calif., has been to the Clinic every year but two. "I was humbled this morning, but still had a ball," he said. Since he started coming, the Clinic has "better equipment, more people own their own equipment, and instructors have new methods of teaching. But what has stayed the same are the volunteers, the upbeat people, and it remains a great event. Everybody skis so well now. People who were just learning a few years ago are now instructing. I've loved coming to this – and still do." Trujillo is happy to be skiing at Snowmass. "It's one of my favorite mountains – it's got something for everyone. It's really a skier's dream!"



Odds & Ends

- * The magic hands of Chester Bentley and his heavenly angels are back again this year to give complimentary 30-minute massages to participants and instructors. Call for appointments at 923-8323. Massages are from 9:00a.m. to 4:00p.m. in the El Dorado Room at the Silvertree Hotel. (Only available until noon on Friday).
- * There is a medical room staffed with a nurse for minimal health issues and nurse advice in the Conference Center. The hours are: 7-9a.m., 11-1p.m., and 4-6p.m. The room is located in the Erickson Room, next to the Host Room.
- * Wheelchair repair will be located in the Ryder truck next to the event equipment truck.
- * Free fruit and cookies are available in the Host Room from 7:30a.m. 7:00p.m. everyday!

From Hills of Hurdles... to Mountains of Majesty

by Derek Thomas, Participant, San Diego, CA

My journey has not fallen short of miracles. In fact, I am fortunate enough to witness these miracles, year after year. When I see another disabled vet try and succeed, to see a person's face light up after doing something they believed to be impossible for them, shows me the growth in myself. In retrospect, that first trip back in 1987 was my first strike at proving to everyone else that I was still able to accomplish anything I put my heart into. It may have been me that I needed to convince, but it gave my life purpose.

I view this annual trip to the mountains not as a vacation, but rather another opportunity to beat the odds. I train year-round in preparation for this event. After all, I am fighting the fight of my life. We all are. But I fully intend to win this one. It has been 15 years since I broke my neck and fractured my skull. As many years since, I was told I'd never walk again.

But I started walking and skiing 14 years ago, and now, snow boarding, so the mountain showed me the miracle. Every year I take the miracle to give it back to the mountain—it's the least I can do as my hurdles stand still behind me, silenced by miracles.



Eats

Menu for Today

Lunch (11:30a.m. - 1:00p.m.): Submarine sandwiches & veggie submarine sandwiches; cucumber herb cream cheese and dill with sprouts; red-skin bliss potato salad with onion-herb vinaigrette; whole fruit; brownies; assorted sodas and water.

Dinner (4:00p.m. - 5:30p.m.): Spinach salad with hot bacon or ranch dressing; artichoke and mushroom salad; pasta salad; herb baked chicken; sliced roast beef, Idaho potatoes; cauliflower & broccoli florets sauteed in olive oil/lemon/white wine; sourdough bread; coffee, teas and iced tea

Breakfast for tomorrow (6:45a.m. - 8:45a.m.): Sliced fresh fruit; oatmeal with raisins, brown sugar, bananas; biscuits and sausage gravy; scrambled eggs; ham & bacon; coffee, tea & chilled juices.

Horrorscope

Aries —Because you lied about your age yesterday, you will not get a good forecast today. When you 'fess up, we'll talk.

Taurus —Oh, quit being so bull-headed...just climb the wall already!.

Gemini —You two-timing creep...beware you've been spotted.

Cancer —More surprises in store. Today check inside your socks.

Leo—You're such a strong fire sign and boy, are you hot! Just don't get fired.

Virgo—Virgos wearing a ponytail should be especially careful today. You must be really nice to your neighbors or else.

Libra—Found your underwear...it was in the media center. Check the news at 10:00.

Scorpio —Don't be so crabby. That's the other sign. But watch your tail.

Sagittarius —You have a couple of hidden talents. Bare them at the talent show on Wednesday.

Capricorn —You are the best skier here. Just *kid-*ding. (Capricorn is a goat, right?)

Aquarius —If you're feeling a bit chaffed today, we're sorry for telling you not to wear underwear yesterday. We meant to say wear sunscreen.

Pisces—Go fishing or try scuba. You're funny when you're "tanked."

